

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 18805 01 OF 03 112240Z
ACTION OES-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEA-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10
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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2518

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 03 CAIRO 18805

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SPOP
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S ROLE IN DEALING WITH PRESSING
- GLOBAL PROBLEMS--POPULATION GROWTH AND
- ADEQUATE FOOD PRODUCTION

REF: (A) STATE 107370 (B) STATE 197794

1. SUMMARY. I, PERSONALLY, AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE MISSION HAVE FOR PAST SEVERAL YEARS DISCUSSED WITH ALL LEVELS OF GOE, INCLUDING PRESIDENT SADAT, PRIMIN SALEM AND OTHER MINISTERS, NEED FOR ACTIVE POPULATION CONTROL PROGRAM AND RELATIONSHIP OF LATTER TO FOOD PROBLEMS. OUR DISCUSSION ON NUTRITION QUESTIONS HAS TAKEN PLACE LARGELY IN CONTEXT OF PREPARING AND CONDUCTING A NUTRITION SURVEY IN EGYPT. EGYPTIAN OFFICIALS FROM SADAT ON DOWN ARE AWARE OF POPULATION PROBLEM. BECAUSE OF DOMESTIC SENSITIVITY OF THE SUBJECT, SADAT HAS BEEN RELUCTANT TO ENGAGE HIMSELF LEST IT CREATE INTERNAL POLITICAL PROBLEMS AT A TIME WHEN ME PEACE PROCESS HAS NOT PROGRESSED FAR. OF LATE, HOWEVER, AND PARTLY AS RESULT OF RECENT CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEETING IN PARIS, PRIMIN SALEM HAS APPEARED TO EXERCISE A MORE ACTIVE LEADERSHIP ROLE IN THIS MATTER. ON AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT
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PAGE 02 CAIRO 18805 01 OF 03 112240Z

PROBLEM, SADAT'S ANNOUNCED POLICY IS TO MAKE EGYPT SELF-SUFFICIENT WITH THE SINGLE EXCEPTION OF WHEAT. SADAT AND HIS MINISTERS BELIEVE THIS CAN BE ACHIEVED THROUGH ACTIVE PROGRAM OF LAND RECLAMATION FOR WHICH THEY WANT USG HELP AND INVESTMENT. SADAT IS ESPECIALLY INTERESTED IN LAND RECLAMATION IN NEW VALLEY. WE HAVE BEEN CHARY ON EXTENSIVE INVOLVEMENT IN LAND RECLAMATION BECAUSE OF HIGH

COST AND LONG GESTATION PERIOD. INSTEAD, WE HAVE ENCOURAGED GOE THINK IN TERMS OF IMPROVING PRODUCTION ON LAND WHICH HAS BEEN PARTIALLY RECLAIMED AS WELL AS ON EXISTING FARM LANDS. GOE AGREES ON NEED FOR COOPERATION OF THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES TO RESOLVE PRESSING GLOBAL PROBLEMS, SUCH AS INADEQUATE FOOD PRODUCTION AND POPULATION GROWTH, BUT TENDS TO SEE THESE PROBLEMS RATHER NARROWLY IN CONTEXT OF ITS OWN SITUATION. GOE HAS SENT LARGE NUMBER OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS TO OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES. END SUMMARY.

2. REGRET DELAY IN REPLYING TO REF A, WHICH DUE TO MY HEAVY INVOLVEMENT IN ME PEACE PROCESS ACTIVITY. I AM NOT ENTIRELY SURE EXACTLY WHAT REF A WANTS ME TO DO OTHER THAN ENGAGE IN HIGH LEVEL DIALOGUE WITH EGYPTIANS ON POPULATION CONTROL, ITS RELATIONSHIP TO FOOD PRODUCTION AND NUTRITIONAL PROBLEMS. ON THIS ASSUMPTION, HERE IS THE SITUATION AS IT PERTAINS TO EGYPT.

3. THE NEED FOR POPULATION CONTROL IN EGYPT AND FOOD PRODUCTION MATTERS HAVE FOR THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS FIGURED PROMINENTLY IN OUR DIALOGUE WITH THE EGYPTIAN AUTHORITIES. SO HAVE THE NUTRITION PROBLEMS OF EGYPT. THIS DIALOGUE HAS BEEN CONDUCTED AT ALL LEVELS. I HAVE AT VARIOUS TIMES DISCUSSED THESE MATTERS WITH PRESIDENT SADAT, PRIMIN SALEM, THE MINISTER OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 CAIRO 18805 01 OF 03 112240Z

HEALTH AND OTHER CONCERNED GOE OFFICIALS. THE AID DIRECTOR AND HIS DEPUTY AND OTHER AID OFFICERS HAVE REPEATEDLY DISCUSSED THEM WITH APPROPRIATE GOE MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS.

4. THE EGYPTIANS ARE AWARE OF THEIR POPULATION PROBLEM. WHENEVER IT IS RAISED, PRESIDENT SADAT ACKNOWLEDGES IT TO BE A MAJOR PROBLEM FOR HIM. SO DO THE PRIMIN AND OTHER EGYPTIAN MINISTERS. FROM A POLITICAL POINT OF VIEW, THE ISSUE OF POPULATION CONTROL HAS BEEN A SENSITIVE ONE AND SADAT, DESPITE THE URGINGS OF MANY (INCLUDING MRS. SADAT), HAS BEEN RELUCTANT TO PRESS THE ISSUE AT HIS LEVEL LEST IT CREATE INTERNAL POLITICAL PROBLEMS FOR HIM AT A TIME WHEN THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS HAS NOT PROGRESSED FAR. WE HAVE NEVERTHELESS BEEN ABLE OF LATE TO GET GREATER INVOLVEMENT BY THE PRIMIN, MIN OF HEALTH AND OTHER INTERESTED MEMBERS. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED (CAIRO 17110), PRIMIN SALEM, AS CHAIRMAN OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL ON POPULATION CONTROL, HAS PLAYED A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS. THE URGING OF DONER COUNTRIES AT THE RECENT CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEETING IN PARIS HAS ALSO REQUIRED THE GOE TO GIVE MORE THOUGHT TO

COPING WITH ITS POPULATION PROBLEM. THERE ARE ALSO ENCOURAGING REPORTS THAT THE SHAIKH OF AL AZHAR HAS AGREED THAT A MORE ACTIVE PROGRAM IS NEEDED, BUT INDICATIONS TO DATE SUGGEST IT IS MORE IN THE NATURE OF POPULATION PLANNING (BASED ON HEALTH OF THE MOTHER) THAN CONTROL. WE WILL CONTINUE TO PRESS THIS ISSUE AT EVERY LEVEL, BUT FRANKLY GOE'S APPROACH UP TO NOW MUST STILL BE DESCRIBED AS FLAILING.

5. WE HAVE ALSO DISCUSSED WITH THE GOE AT ALL LEVELS (INCLUDING SADAT) THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE FOOD PROBLEM TO POPULATION GROWTH. THERE IS SOME RECOGNITION IN EGYPT OF THIS RELATIONSHIP. SADAT'S RESPONSE HAS

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 18805 02 OF 03 112242Z
ACTION OES-09

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R 111736Z AUG 78
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 02 OF 03 CAIRO 18805

ALWAYS BEEN THAT HE WISHES TO MAKE EGYPT SELF-SUFFICIENT IN FOOD WITH THE SINGLE EXCEPTION OF WHEAT. WHEAT, THE PRESIDENT CONTENDS, CANNOT BE GROWN IN SUFFICIENT QUANTITIES HERE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE GROWING POPULATION; HENCE EGYPT MUST CONTINUE TO IMPORT A LARGE PORTION OF ITS WHEAT REQUIREMENTS. SADAT AND HIS MINISTERS AGREE ON THE NEED TO IMPROVE AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT AND WELCOME OUR COOPERATION. IN THEIR VIEW, THIS CAN BEST BE ACHIEVED BY SIZEABLE USG INVESTMENT IN FURTHER LAND RECLAMATION ACTIVITIES. SADAT SPECIFICALLY SPEAKS OF WANTING OUR HELP, IN TERMS OF AID INVESTMENT, IN DEVELOPING THE NEW VALLEY, WHICH HE HAS DESCRIBED TO ME AS THE MONUMENT THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO BEQUEATH HIS PEOPLE. WE FRANKLY HAVE SOME DOUBTS ABOUT ANY EXCESSIVE AID INVESTMENT IN LAND RECLAMATION, SINCE THIS IS HIGHLY EXPENSIVE WITH LITTLE TO SHOW FOR THE INVESTMENT FOR A LONG PERIOD OF TIME. INSTEAD, WE HAVE

ENCOURAGED THE GOE TO THINK IN TERMS OF BRINGING INTO PRODUCTION THE LAND WHICH HAS BEEN PARTIALLY RECLAIMED AND OF INCREASING PRODUCTION ON EXISTING FARM LANDS THROUGH PROGRAMS SUCH AS THOSE SUPPORTING IMPROVED WATER MANAGEMENT AND INCREASED DRAINAGE FACILITIES. WE WILL CONTINUE OUR DIALOGUE WITH GOE ON AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT.

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PAGE 02 CAIRO 18805 02 OF 03 112242Z

6. GOE FACES A DILEMMA IN THE FOOD PRODUCTION AREA. FROM A PURELY ECONOMIC POINT OF VIEW, IT CAN BE ARGUED THAT EGYPT IS UNWISE IN AIMING FOR SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN EVERYTHING BUT WHEAT. INSTEAD, IT SHOULD FOCUS ITS AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION ON "VALUE" CROPS FOR EXPORT RATHER THAN FOOD FOR ITS PEOPLE. THESE "VALUE" CROPS (FRUIT, VEGETABLES, ETC.) COULD BE EXPORTED TO NEARBY EUROPE AND THE PROCEEDS EARNED COULD BE USED FOR IMPORTING FOODSTUFFS WHICH ARE MORE EFFICIENTLY PRODUCED ELSEWHERE. IN OTHER WORDS, EGYPTIAN AGRICULTURE SHOULD BE BASED ON "COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE". SOME EGYPTIAN OFFICIALS AGREE IN PRINCIPLE, BUT NOTE THAT EGYPT IS STILL IN A WAR-TIME SITUATION AND THAT ITS SECURITY REQUIREMENTS SHOULD INCLUDE MAXIMUM SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN PRODUCING FOODSTUFFS.

7. ON THE MATTER OF NUTRITION, I HAVE DISCUSSED THIS WITH THE MINISTER OF HEALTH WHO IS VITALLY INTERESTED IN THE SUBJECT. MOST PERTINENT DISCUSSIONS HAVE TAKEN PLACE WITH USAID, HOWEVER. DISCUSSION ON NUTRITIONAL QUESTIONS HAVE TAKEN PLACE LARGELY IN THE CONTEXT OF PREPARING FOR AND CONDUCTING A NATIONAL NUTRITION SURVEY IN EGYPT AND DURING THE COURSE OF WORK OF A TEAM FROM THE INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE OF OUR NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF HEALTH. A DRAFT OF THE NUTRITION SURVEY, WHICH WAS CONDUCTED BY THE CDC, WAS DELIVERED TO THE EGYPTIAN NUTRITION INSTITUTE AND TO US ON AUGUST 2, 1978. WE PLAN TO DISCUSS ITS CONTENTS WITH MINISTRY OF HEALTH PERSONNEL, INCLUDING THE MINISTER, IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THE REPORT OF THE TEAM FROM THE INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE SHOULD BE AVAILABLE IN DRAFT BY ABOUT THE END OF AUGUST AND WILL ALSO BE DISCUSSED WITH THE MINISTER AND HIS COLLEAGUES. IN THE CASE OF BOTH OF THESE REPORTS,

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PAGE 03 CAIRO 18805 02 OF 03 112242Z

WE INTEND TO SUGGEST THAT OTHER INTERESTED MINISTRIES ALSO BE INVOLVED IN THE DISCUSSIONS, ESPECIALLY THE

MINISTRY OF PLANNING.

8. OUR DISCUSSIONS TO DATE INDICATE THAT THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH IS ALIVE TO THE IMPORTANCE OF IMPROVING THE NUTRITIONAL SITUATION OF THE EGYPTIAN PEOPLE. WE BELIEVE THE GOE WILL BE OPEN TO SUGGESTIONS CONCERNING PROGRAMS TO ASSIST IT IN SUCH AN EFFORT. THE AVAILABILITY OF TWO DRAFT REPORTS BEARING ON THE SUBJECT SHOULD SET THE STAGE FOR A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN PROGRAMS DIRECTED AT SUCH ASSISTANCE. AT SUCH TIME AS MORE CONCRETE SUGGESTIONS FOR MORE ASSISTANCE ARE DEVELOPED, AN APPROACH BY ME TO THE PRESIDENT WOULD BE HELPFUL. WE WOULD ESTIMATE THIS MIGHT BE CALLED FOR AROUND THE END OF OCTOBER.

9. OUR OBJECTIVE IS TO DEVELOP A GREATER HIGH LEVEL GOE UNDERSTANDING OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POPULATION CONTROL, FOOD PRODUCTION AND NUTRITIONAL IMPROVEMENT.

10. GOE AGREES ON THE NEED FOR COOPERATION OF THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES TO RESOLVE PRESSING GLOBAL PROBLEMS THAT AFFECT ALL NATIONS, INCLUDING RAPID POPULATION GROWTH AND INADEQUATE FOOD PRODUCTION. IT IS AWARE OF THE LIMITED NUMBER OF MAJOR FOOD EXPORTING COUNTRIES AND THE GROWING PROBLEM OF MEETING PROJECTED WORLD FOOD DEMAND, ALTHOUGH IT TENDS TO SEE THE PROBLEM RATHER NARROWLY IN THE CONTEXT OF ITS OWN SITUATION IN THIS REGARD. GOE IS IN PRINCIPLE PREPARED TO COOPERATE WITH FOOD DEFICIT COUNTRIES TO EXPLORE WAYS IN WHICH THEIR DOMESTIC SUPPLY AND DEMAND CAN BE BROUGHT INTO BALANCE AND ALREADY HAS A LARGE NUMBER OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS IN OTHER ARAB

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 18805 03 OF 03 112242Z
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